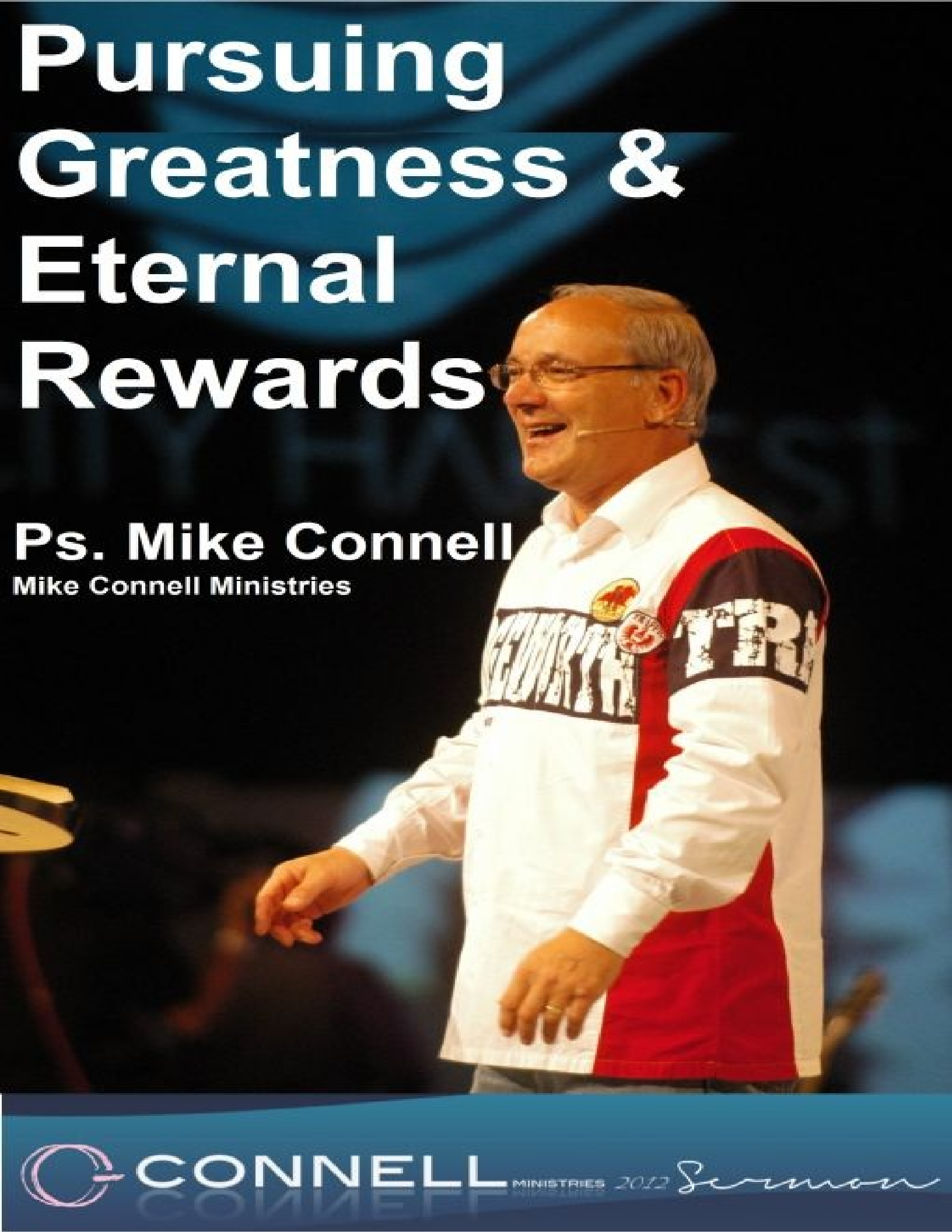
Pursuing Greatness & Eternal Rewards



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Mike Connell Ministries

CONNELL MINISTRIES 2012 Sermon

Pursuing Greatness and Eternal Rewards

 Audio Transcript of a Regular Sunday Sermon

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Smashwords Edition

Summary: *Most people live just in the pressures and problems of their immediate day to day life and can't rise up above it. You need to be gripped by a vision of where your life is going and what you're called to be and to do. If we have no concepts about what God has prepared for us we just fritter away our days and meaningless activities consume our life. Your life is precious. You've only got one to live*



Pursuing Greatness and Eternal Rewards

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Well I want you to just open your Bible in Ephesians, Chapter 2, we're going to start there. Over the last few weeks I've been sharing a series to help shift your perspective about life. Most people can't get past today. Most people don't live past today. Most people live just in the pressures and problems of their immediate day to day life, and can't rise up above it. One of the things that we need, to be able to help us to rise above things, is not just some simple things on how to cope with life; but you need to be gripped by a vision of where your life is going, and what you're called to be, and to do.

If we have no sense of eternity, and no sense that this life is so short, that it's just like an apprenticeship for something that goes on forever; if we have no concepts about what God has prepared for us, we will just fritter away our days, and actually end up with meaningless activities, and it consumes our life. If this is your preparation for eternity, you would not want to be consuming it with trivia. I'm astonished at our people having no sense of eternal purpose and perspective, fritter their life away on trivia. Your life is precious. You've only got one to live. Money you can get back again, possessions you can get back again. Your life - you've only got one to live.

We need to live it passionately in a focussed, intentional way, and have something that we're working, and walking, towards. It goes beyond just getting a house, or getting this or getting that, and actually has God's eternal viewpoint in mind. So when we come to think about eternity, people have all sorts of fuzzy ideas, and I want to today remove some of the fuzzy ideas, and help you understand something that Jesus had much to say about.

So I want to start first of all, just where we were last week in Ephesians Chapter 2. I need this to be very clear, before we go to where we're going to go. In Ephesians Chapter 2, it says: by grace have you been saved

through faith, and that is not of yourselves, it's a gift of God, not works, lest anyone should boast. Let's stop there. You and I become a Christian, become a follower of Christ. We become born again, or changed, by a transaction of faith. No one can make you a Christian. No one can do anything to make you a Christian. It is an act of faith in your heart.

When I put my trust in what Jesus Christ did, Christ and His work alone on the cross, by faith the benefits come to me, my sins are forgiven, the spirit of God comes into my life and heart, and I am born again. I'm a new person, connected to God forever. This is a wonderful, wonderful truth. We can't emphasise it enough.

But the Bible has other truths as well, so the foundational truth to build your life on, is this: that you do not have to work, to gain acceptance with God. You are already approved when you trust in the work of Jesus Christ; so the Bible tells us very clearly, if I will put my trust in Christ, God will respond, and I will be born again, and become part of the family of God. So we need as a foundation, for day to day relating with God: we're in covenant, accepted unconditionally. If I have a good day or a bad day, that does not change God's opinion of me. He still loves me. He loves me passionately. He loves you passionately, and He will lift us up, and keep us going forward. He's a great father.

Now I want to move us beyond that. In Verse 10 it says: now you are created for something, you're created for a purpose. Now that purpose is not just drudging your way through life. Young people, you need to get this very thing inside you: that God has planned a destiny for you, and you've only got a limited time span to work it out in. If you're 80 in the church today, then you reckon you possibly got 10, maybe 20 years; but if you're a young person and you're about 15, you think you've got forever. Actually you don't have forever, and it soon goes, and what you realise is, you can't get it back. We can't get it back! Its running out - so if we live our life thinking: I've only got a short time in my life to prepare myself, and to lay up for eternity for myself, I should be busy.

So the Bible says we're created in Christ for good works, and that God intends we walk and live in them. God prepared them for us, so God has prepared something for you to accomplish with your life, that's unique to

you. You don't have to copy me, or do the things I do. You need to do the things God called you to do; so passivity and apathy, and fear and unbelief, are all your eternal enemies. If you let them get the better of you, you will find yourself slipping back from the best that God has for you. God is looking for your best.

Now having said that, I want us to go into Revelations, Chapter 19. We just have to pick up, and make sure that each time that we talk about this area, we have it very clear: we're saved by faith; not works. Got that? No works to get saved. No works to get into heaven, except believing, okay?

However, in heaven we'll find not everything is equal. In eternity, not all are equal; and I want to really get this truth. I've been trying to come at it from different ways. I want to show you something from the word of God. We're going to go through a few scriptures, and I felt the Lord's given me just ability to just put them together in a way that they're really evident when you look at them, just what the truth is. In Revelations Chapter 19, the event to come, it says: let us be glad and rejoice - verse 7 - and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready, and to her was granted she would be arrayed or dressed or clothed in fine linen, clean and white, with a fine linen of the righteous acts of the saints. Then He said: write it down - blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the lamb. These are the true sayings of our God.

So we see here that there's an event to come, which the church needs to know about. It is a great event. It is a great event at the return of Jesus, of a great celebration for those who are His followers. It's an event which is described in many ways, and one way is that of a wedding feast, a feast where there's a great celebration, great rejoicing, and it's a great and wonderful experience. It says: let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the lamb is come. His wife has made herself ready. Now you notice here that we're all called to this - doesn't guarantee we'll all get there - but we're all called to it. We're all invited. You've got an invitation to a wedding.

And it says: now His wife has made herself ready. In other words, she has prepared herself for what she knows is about to come. Coming to

church does not prepare you. It can help, but preparation is something you do day by day. Preparation has to do with what you are personally doing with your life. I can't do your preparation for you. I can inspire you, and give you direction and encouragement and instruction and so on, but you prepare yourself for this. This is about your life, and how you're living your life.

And it says: to her was granted, or to her was given a gift, so she prepared herself; and now a gift is given, and the gift is given because she prepared herself. If she didn't prepare herself, no gift given; prepared herself, gift given. You get the connection very clearly. The gift is given because the preparation took place. She prepared herself, and to her was given or granted that she should be clothed in fine linen, clean and white - fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints; so when you read it, and we've probably heard it - I've even sung it, had songs about it a while back, but I didn't have a clue what it all meant; and I want to help you understand some things about what this meant.

The bride is given garments, or there's a clothing given, so just hold on to this thought, that when you come to some very important thing, usually you dress up for it, and so the Bible says that God gives the clothing. The clothing comes from Him, but the preparation is our part. Now I want to understand a little bit about the clothing, and I want to just shift some of the thoughts we have, because most of us, you think about heaven, you think about people in white robes wandering around. I wonder what on earth do they do with all their time? Actually nothing could be further from the truth. This is just a common concept that people have, which on looking into the word of God, you find it's not like that at all. It's just a concept people have, and so I want to help you shift in that concept.

The first thing to get is this: to receive garments is evidence of bestowing great honour and reward on you; so wherever in the Bible we see garments are given, it's associated with honour, and reward for something the person did. So if you want to understand things in the Bible, you've got to look and go through the Bible, and see where and how these things happen, so if we were to go through the Bible and I'll just highlight a few for you so you can understand and see them very easily, some examples of it. So let's get the first one, here, a very simple

one in Genesis 37, Verse 3. Joseph, when he was a young man, received a garment or robe from his father, as an evidence of particular favour and grace. He actually was dad's favourite, so one of the first evidences of getting a garment, receiving a garment, was Joseph, who got it because he had special love and favour with his father.

The second one that I notice in the Bible, is found in Genesis 41 verse 42. You'll find that the theme is completely consistent, so each time you look, it's the same kind of deal. Now you can't understand Revelation unless you look consistently what happened through the Bible, so in Genesis 41, Verses 41 and 42, Pharaoh has said - Verse 40 - you shall be over my house. All my people shall be ruled according to your word, only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you; and Pharaoh has said to Joseph: see, I have set you over all the land of Egypt. So you notice he's been bestowed a huge honour of authority to rule. Now the Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand, a sign of that authority, an authority to act on the Pharaoh's behalf, put it on Joseph's hand - notice this - and clothed him in garments of fine linen. Here's the first example you see of someone being clothed in garments of fine linen, and it was a reward or an honour associated with him entering a whole new realm of honour. He went from the prison, the place of extreme difficulty and testing and trying; and he went to the throne, where he ruled with the Pharaoh over a nation; and notice this, apart from other things, garments, white linen, was given to him associated with that.

Now let's have a look, another example of it, and you'll find this in Esther, Chapter 6. We read in Esther Chapter 6, and you find there's someone else gets honoured, and I want you to see what kind of honour this person gets. In Esther Chapter 6: and Haman came in, and the King asked him: what shall I do to the man, the King delights to honour? And Haman thought in his heart, now who would the King delight to honour, more than me? And so Haman answered the King: well for the man who the King delights to honour, let a royal robe which the King has worn, and a horse the King has ridden, and the royal crest placed on it, said the robe and the horse be delivered by the hand of the King's most noble prince, that he may array the man whom the King delights to honour, and parade him on horseback through the city, and proclaim before him. And

Verse 10, the King said to Haman: hurry, take the robe and the horse, and give it to Mordecai, and parade him through. Let nothing be left undone. So you notice now again, the garment is associated with honour, great honour, great honour, the bestowal of great honour.

Okay, let's have a look at another one now and let's go through into Revelations Chapter 3, and in Revelations Chapter 3, John is having a revelation of the end times, and so this is a message for today. The Bible says: blessed is the man who reads this book, and keeps the words of the book. There's a blessing for reading the Book of Revelation. I try to read it regularly.

Okay, notice what it says now in Revelations Chapter 3, verse 4 through to 6: Now you have a few names, even in Sardis, who have not defiled their garments. They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes, shall be clothed in white garments. Now notice - who was he writing to here? He was writing to the church. What kind of church is he writing to? He's writing to a church that's got a lack of strength. He's writing to a church that needs encouragement and correction, but basically he's writing to believers. Now notice what he says: there's a promise to those who overcome. Now overcoming is not something everyone does. We're all called to, and God will help us to; but that doesn't mean we do, unless we choose to. So the Sardis Church, the church in Sardis had a number of things to overcome, and this is what Jesus said: If you overcome, then I will give you, to be arrayed in white linen. Now he's not talking about getting saved. They're already saved. He's talking about clothing them in some form of garments.

Okay, we'll do one more example now; and obviously in that one, there's a possibility that they may not overcome, and they may not get the white garments. We're just going to go back in the Old Testament again, and I want you to look with me in Exodus 28. Now this again is God's idea. All of this is God's idea. It's not something anyone made up. Now I want you to look in Exodus 28, verse 2 through to verse 4. Now this is what God instructed Moses; He said: you shall make holy garments for Aaron, your brother - notice what the garments are for - here we get the first insight what this thing about these garments are, because otherwise you're going to think you're just going to have some kind of long flowing white

robe, and you walk around in that. I want you to understand there's much more than that, there's far more than that, that's an inadequate description of something.

So here it is here; He says: notice that the garments are for glory, and for beauty. God's idea was that Aaron the High Priest, and his sons, have special garments that they would wear. That was God's idea; and not only that, God gave explicit instructions what the garments would be like, and the purpose of the garments, because God had in mind that this natural thing would be superseded by something that was far more glorious. So when we go to the Old Testament, which was the natural, He said: I want to have beautiful garments, garments for glory and honour, and magnificent garments, so when people see it they will be stunned at what they see. Why? Because down the line, it's not just going to be one person; it'll be in that priesthood. I've got a whole group of people I'm planning to make priests, and I have garments for them.

So right back there in the Old Testament, God required exact detail. There were jewels, there were precious stones on the breast, precious stones on the shoulders, special garments, every detail was spelt out. Why? Because God understood that in the future, He has something great planned for his people, that involves clothing them with great glory, and great majesty, and great honour; and so he prefigures it, or shows it up in the Old Testament, and then in the Book of Revelation. He says: you have to overcome to get there. You have to overcome to get there. Getting the idea?

Okay, so what we learn here, that in each of these cases that we've said, God associates - in the word of God in the Bible - it associates the receiving of garments with great position of honour and value, and esteem and majesty. In other words, it represents a reward for something the person's been positioned into. It's an acknowledgement of something about their life, and we see in every case, it did not go to every person. Actually, it came to some people. Getting the idea?

Alright then, so that raises for us then, when we come to Christ, we receive righteousness, and the ability to enter heaven, to stand before the living God. But while we're here on earth, our life's journey and

ministry prepares, and lays up for us, the right to glory and honour and majesty in eternity. It's closely connected. The bride prepared herself, that's why she got this. In every one of these situations, they had to do something, in order to receive.

So okay, now let's have a look now. So eternal garments are expressions actually of God's glory and God's beauty, so the garments He's talking about, it's not like a shirt like this, or trousers like this, or anything like this. These garments that the Bible talks about, are a manifestation of God's own glory and beauty on a person's life. You've probably been to places, or seen significant events; so look at the Coronation, or something like that. You notice the way they all dress up - it's just majestic. Everything is just amazing, how they all dress. We saw when Prince William got married, and just the way everyone - the fuss that's on the bride's dress. You know, it's this great secret, and then it's out, and everyone wants to copy it, but they've only got a copy. There's only one original, only one original, okay?

So the first thing is, I want you to do now in relation to this, I want you to just forget just thinking that: in eternity, you're going to walk around in white robes, and do nothing much. Play a harp, sing [Laughter] wander around, smell the flowers, that kind of stuff. It's just ridiculous, and yet that is the concept people have, because we don't have revelation or insight. The first thing you've got to understand is, why did God design you? He didn't design you just to be able to wander around in a white robe and smell the roses. Why did He design man? He designed man for an intimate relationship, and to advance His kingdom, and His interest. He raised up man. What is man, that you are mindful of Him; or the son of man, you visit Him; you have crowned Him with glory and honour, made him a little lower than the angels; crowned him with glory and honour and raised him to have dominion over the all the works of your hands. God has a work for you to do. It starts now. You're on your apprenticeship now. God is watching every day, every item, everything you do, how you do it, why you do it. Why? Because He's preparing something much greater, and if you're wallying around, passive, slack, not praying, why would you think you're going to inherit anything much?

It doesn't make any sense whatsoever; and not only that, it's highly de-motivating to think I can have a slack spiritual life, live in compromise the way I like, and yet I don't miss out on something. That just does not make reasonable sense to anyone, and it defies that God is a just God. The reality is, him that overcomes shall be arrayed in white linen; so we need to just explore this a little more. So the first thing is, don't just kind of get that idea of you're just wandering around in white robes. God is going to empower us with His nature, and his glory; and He wants to bestow great honour, great glory, great value on you; and He's designed clothing for you, for eternity. You will wear it for eternity. It'll be diverse; and one of the difficulties we have, when you try and explain spiritual things, it's hard to get natural language for it; so what they did was, they used the word linen.

Now the word linen, linen was the nicest, most expensive material you could get in the days these things were written, so when He writes the word linen, it doesn't mean in heaven you've got some nice linen garments on, or everyone's wandering around in a white t-shirt, and some white shorts, longs or whatever. Just think about that - doesn't make any sense at all, because God is incredibly creative. Heaven is a beautiful place. Earth just reflects the glory of what heaven is like; so earth is a diverse, beautiful place; and so heaven is a glorious place. It makes no sense that when it comes to creativity, God is left outside, when it comes to designing garments for you.

How could He be creative in everything, and then end up with you in a white t-shirt in heaven? Doesn't make any sense, does it? No, no, no, no. Everything God does is beautiful, and so He's designed for us garments of glory and beauty, so you're not going to wander around in a white t-shirt and a white robe. The linen was the only way, the only word available, to describe something that was extremely precious, and of fine quality; and we'll see some other things about it just in a moment.

Okay, now the thing to understand is, what does God clothe Himself in? That's a good thought to ask. Well fortunately the Bible tells us - I'm glad you asked - so here it is in Psalm 104, what does God wear, you know? what clothes does He wear? Interesting thought, isn't it? Come on, have a look in Psalm 104. You'll see it, and the Bible tells us very clearly: He

clothes Himself in light. Very good, very good, so Psalm 104, let's have a look in Psalm 104 verse 1 and 2: The Lord, my God, you are great. You are clothed with honour and majesty. In other words, you're clothed with exceedingly great glory, and magnificence and majesty. We can't find the words, so we use the word glory and majesty; and it says: you clothe yourself, or cover yourself, with light; as if you were covering yourself with a garment. So in other words, God's clothing, or what He clothes Himself with, or wears around - it's His glory, it's His nature, and it shines and shimmers, and casts out tremendous light. Paul wrote to Timothy. He said: God dwells in light, which is unapproachable; so if God were to reveal Himself, your flesh could not take it. That's what the Bible's very clear about - you couldn't take it, if God showed all of Himself; so He covers Himself with light, so to come into the presence of God ,is to come into the presence of His glory; and it registers to you as great shining light. He can conceal it, make it look just like garments, and we'll see that in just a moment, but its glorious light, see?

In Revelations 4 verse 2 and 3, it tells us that when He, He who sits on the throne - it talks about it Him being like a jasper, and the sardius stone; so John is looking, in the Book of Revelation, he's looking into heaven. He says: oh, how can I describe it? Well like a jasper, meaning a diamond. God is just like a diamond, glistening and glittering and flashing just like a diamond would; so if you've ever seen a diamond in a jewellers shop, a big diamond, got those little lights on it, and it goes flash, flash, flash, flash, flash and you - ooh, it's lovely! I want it! [Laughter] So what he's saying is, he's trying to get language you can understand, to describe something which is spiritual; so he says: you know what a diamond is like? Beautiful, big, multi rock, multi carat diamond, all glittering and shining? That's what God is like. He's more beautiful than that - he says like a sardius stone. Sardius is red. It shines off a red glow. He's full of life and energy, so he's trying to find language to describe what God looks like in heaven. The Bible's full of it, but it uses picture words to describe it; so - now here's the thing - that even when Jesus was on earth, He gave a glimpse of this.

Let's have a look and I want you to look with me in Matthew 17. Jesus gave a glimpse of what this would be, and what it would look like. Here it

is in Matthew 17. You've read it, but you probably haven't seen what this was. Now he says in Verse 1: after six days, He took Peter, James and John, and went up to a mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. Something happened as Jesus prayed on the mountain. Now He's just in a human body like ours, but His human body, His clothing, the glory of God, the nature of God, the true man, the spirit man, the man of the heart is hidden away with this garment that's clothed Him. It's called his body; and Moses, as he prayed, his face literally began to emanate rays, light came out, his garments even began to shine, because the glory, the nature, the presence of God that was in Him was beginning to reveal and show forth. It was no longer concealed, and as it showed forth, the effect on His body was, it began to radiate light. His clothes radiated light. It was like the sun, it was so bright. That was Jesus in his physical body. When His glory manifested, He looked like a shining light. It was the nature of God manifesting. His clothes looked light, looked bright. In Mark 9 he says - he's trying to describe it. He says it's whiter - it's like snow. It's like it's so white, it looks like - I don't know. It's whiter than anyone can make a garment. He's lost the language. What he's trying to do is, describe an experience where Jesus, manifesting the hidden glory within Him, is beginning to shine forth like a light, and they're starting to see the true reality, who is in this person is God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ; and when God revealed Himself, His whole countenance and clothing ignited with bright light.

Isn't that amazing? And the Bible tells us in 2 Peter, that was what He's going to be like, when He comes again. This was what they saw. They got a prefigure of the second coming, and a prefigure of what will happen. Now the Bible tells us that Christ is in you, and this light is hidden in you. It's the hidden man inside the heart, so God is wanting us to grow our inner life, our life with God, and it expresses itself through our life; so that when that day comes, we will be seen, we'll be like Him.

Let's go back here in Revelations 19 again, and then I want to just get on to - there are two possibilities: that one, you'll be clothed; and two, you won't be clothed. It's true, and I've found them in the Bible. I'll show you the scriptures that bear witness to it, so let's have a look at first of all the clothing. In Revelations 19 verse 8, and here's the clothing that we have,

and it says: here to her was granted - Verse 8 - she would be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright or white - and that word there is the word lampas, from which we get the word lamp. So what he's saying is - he's not saying that the clothing is, like it's just a natural linen, and its white colour. The word he uses is the word lampas, which means to radiate or shine, or glitter or glisten, with life and glory. He can't find language to - he can't find anything - says: it's white, or it is lamp-like, would be a better way to say it; so he's saying that the clothing, that was given to the overcoming church, is lamp-like in its appearance. It literally glistens, and glitters, and shines - it's so glorious.

In Revelations 3 it's a similar thing, when he talks about the garments being given to the overcomer; he called them: white raiment. Actually the word white is still a problem, because white is the best colour he could use. If he said: you know if something is really hot and blazing, it becomes white hot, see? And so what he's trying to say, it's like it so shines. I bet the best thing we could say: it's white; but actually the word we're using is lamp-like, shining, glistening, glittering. In other words, what he's saying is: the garments are beautiful, magnificent garments, formed specifically by God for you, and they reveal aspects of His glory, and they also reveal aspects of how you have grown and developed in this journey of your apprenticeship. And those garments that you will receive, will exactly reflect what you accomplish with your life while you're on the earth, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

In other words, it is God who ascribes to you, reward and honour and majesty, according to how you've lived your life on the earth; and it's given to you, so you can't buy it, or earn it. It is given, but you can position yourself, so that this actually is the path that your life takes, a path with eternity in mind, and I'm living every day to count. Getting the idea?

Now, so we've got the idea then about the garments, what they may look like. They are actually a manifestation of God's nature and glory. Now the thing that's helpful to understand is, that in eternity, it will vary. If we were to go in our community, we would find rich people and poor people. In heaven it's the same. I'll give you a scripture - I'll give you two scriptures. I want to just show you these scriptures quickly, and then we'll just finish

and show you just exactly how Jesus talks about the possibility of loss, and the need for us to be proactive in our Christian life and faith, because eternal reward is at stake.

I want to share you two scriptures just on reward. Here it is. The first one's found in Matthew, Chapter 16. There are heaps of them, I'm just going to give you two. In Matthew 16 verse 27: For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father, with His angels. So he's talking about the second coming of Christ you see, the second coming; He will come in glory - so when they saw Him on the mountain, they saw what He would look like - absolutely amazing and brilliant, so magnificent they fell down. They couldn't handle it. It was too much. It was overwhelming for them - and he says: when He comes, He will come in the glory of His Father with His angels; now notice what it says He will do. He will reward each man, according to his work. Now this statement about rewarding according to his work is repeated in Revelation. Low I come quickly; my reward is with me, to get every man according to his work.

Now what you have to understand is: your work, is your work. The work He's talking about, is the work you have done in this life, representing God and His interests. I'm not talking about preaching. I'm talking about the unique work God called you to do with your life. This is personal. I can't do that work for you, and you can't copy me and do your work. Every man has their own work, and only God can tell you what that is. Everyone, and the work God has for you, is unique to you, your personality, your background, whatever; and God has got various ways of looking how to evaluate it, but notice this: the reward is according to your work. No work, no reward. Lots of accomplishing the will of God, a bigger reward. It's very, very clear. We've shared enough scriptures on that for you to see that, so the reward that Jesus has - in other words He's saying this: I really appreciate people who responded to my gift of my life. I gave the only thing I could give really, was I gave the thing most precious. I let my life be laid down, for you to be saved; so you could then live a different life, and honour me; and those who've honoured me, them also will I honour. It makes sense. So He laid his life down, so freely we could be saved; and after that we need to let His life live in us, and express in

us, so we live a life that brings honour to Him. Those that honour me, I will honour. Makes sense doesn't it?

And He said: and I will reward them. Now just in case you thought that this may not be true, I want you to see that Paul repeats the same thing. It's so repeated, I've just got to use a couple of scriptures just so you see it. One Corinthians, Chapter 3, here it is here. Verse 13: If any man's work, each one's work will become clear - so right now I wouldn't have a clue whether your work was good or bad, or anything else. I wouldn't have a clue; and not only that, I'm not going to be able to find out, because it'll never be clear until the day of Christ. It'll never be clear, because only God knows exactly what you're doing. Here we are sitting here, I don't know who's sitting here, and secretly you have no position, no public profile, nothing. But behind the scene you're living out an intimate life with Jesus. You're touching the lives of people with kindness, you're ministering to people, you're serving and maybe at your home and family, and the people that are around you, there's a flow of the life of Jesus. I couldn't see that. Only God can see that.

So it says the day - that's the day when He comes, and He sorts this thing out - so that's when it'll be clear. Right now we don't know, and in that day it'll be really clear, because He will honour ones that have honoured Him. Isn't that good? It's exciting isn't it aye, because it puts us all on the same kind of level then aye? And it says: it will be revealed by fire. The fire will test each one's work, what sort of work - so if anyone's work which He's built endures, He rewards; so God will just check out what you did, so He's got a great movie player there. He's got a record of everything you did and said, and why you did it, and He'll play it all back, and have a little look at it, and you will see why you did what you did, how you did what you did - if you were a slacker, it'll be seen. If you were diligent, it will be seen. If there was love in it, it'll be seen; if there was an agenda in it, it'll all be seen. It'll all be seen, and then He said: and if the work stands up to Jesus' investigation of it, then you'll be rewarded.

So works that are done out of a motive of love, works that flow out of intimacy with the Lord, those are the things that will abide; not doing what someone else told you to do. Not trying to please someone, or trying to gain some position, gain some influence, gain some - nothing like that's

going to do it. It's what came out of your relationship with Christ, and your love for Him; and you've decided to serve Him, and you just did it under Him; so this is repeated. Whatsoever you do, do heartily as the Lord, not to men. Don't be a man pleaser - men pleaser, always waiting to do something that someone notices, so they can get ahead. Tell you what; you've had your reward. You got ahead - but it just gets burnt up.

Now notice what else it says here. It says: if your work remains - in other words, when God gives it a look over; and it's interesting when John saw Jesus, he saw Him with eyes like fire, looking right in. Oh oh, you look right in. See, we can hide from one another; we can't hide from Him - he said: but anyone's work is burned up, he suffers loss - ooh - but he will be saved. Oh, thank goodness! I thought for a moment I wasn't going to be saved. It's got nothing to do with salvation, and being saved. It's got everything to do with what God is going to reward His people with.

He said: you'll be saved, but so as by fire; or literally, it's like this: it's like a man who built a house, and it caught fire, and it burnt down, and he just got out in the nick of time; and he was saved, but he's smelling of smoke, and there's nothing left, and there was no insurance. Get the idea? So he got out; but there he is, smelling of smoke, and you see the burn marks, and the tatty garments and stuff, and that's it? I don't want to just get into heaven, and that's it - smoke of everything around me, and I've just made it in.

I don't want to just make it inside the gate, not when there's greater things ahead for us! Want to live a life that's passionate, and on fire, and serving God, and having impact and influence! I don't want to be held down by passivity, and apathy, and other kinds of negative things! I want to live passionately. There's a lot at stake for me. That's a good incentive. See, free enterprise really does work. People do work harder if they're motivated with a reward. It actually works.

Now we'll just try and draw this to a close now. Okay then, so some are saved, but they don't have any reward. Okay, now having said that, now I want you to see just a couple of simple scriptures about the possibility you could make it into heaven, and yet not be clothed; and Jesus' remedy for it. It's a very simple remedy. It's actually so simple I love it.

You'll love it too, so just give a couple more verses, just have a little bit of patience. Revelation 16 verse 15. This is Jesus talking, and He says this, look at this: Behold, I am coming like a thief. Do thieves let you know when they're coming? No, so they just come when you don't expect; so He said: I'm coming as a thief. He isn't a thief. He's coming unexpectedly, is what He's saying; and notice what He says: Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments, otherwise he will be naked and they'll see his shame. So what He's saying - now He's writing to church people - and He's saying: blessed is he who watches. To watch is always being connected with praying, and being spiritually alive and vibrant; so be alive and vibrant in prayer, and living an active life for Christ. Then you won't lose your garments, and you won't be found naked. To be found naked, it's to be unclothed. Something is missing from your life, your clothes; and so He said: it's possible some Christians would be found naked. They get to heaven, but they don't have the reward they're entitled to - because they aren't entitled to it of course.

Revelations 3, here it is again. Now this is to the church. Look at this. I hope this doesn't apply to you, but this is to the church of Laodicea. It says: I know your works. You're neither cold nor hot; you're just lukewarm, passive, indifferent, and don't care anything about anything; and He says: you say you're rich and you're wealthy, and have need of nothing, but actually - notice what He says - now He's talking about believers: You're actually wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked. Naked. Naked. He's talking to believers, and saying that they are naked. What does that mean? If a believer is naked, it's got nothing to do with his physical clothing. He has not clothed his life with something. There's something missing in his life; and the keys that are in there are quite clear. It has to do with lukewarmness, passivity, indifference and compromise; and He says: that leaves you in a state where you think you're okay. I'm alright mate - but actually, from God's perspective, you're wretched and poor, and blind and naked. So we look at one another and think: well I'm doing alright. At least I turn up on Sunday and pray, you know; but that's got nothing to do with anything. It's got to do with God's evaluation of the kind of life you're living, and His counsel is to buy of me. In other words, you're going to have to do something to get what you need. You're going to have to actually

exchange something, to get what you need; and we'll just get to that in a moment.

So notice there, He talks about to be naked, or to be ashamed in eternity, means that you lack a reward in eternity. He's concerned about the church. All these churches, He's talking about what's missing, so they'll adjust and repent and make a change, so they can inherit and receive what He had for them; and so He's saying there: I want you to repent. I want you to have a change of mind, change your life, change your course; because I want to clothe you with great glory and honour, but it's connected to something you should be doing right now. So then the question is, what must I do? What do I need to do? Now here it is here: I counsel you, you are wretched, poor, miserable, blind and naked spiritually. Buy from me gold, refined in the fire, that you may be rich; white garments, that you may be clothed.

Now I won't go into it all but I want to just pick out just a key thought on it here. First of all, this is a counsel of God to the church, living in an era of lukewarmness and passivity. That's God's counsel. This is Jesus' counsel. It's good to follow the counsel of God, not the other opinions of people. I found in the church, there's a lot of people have opinions. Actually they don't count for a toot. It's the opinion of God that really counts. It's the opinion of God that really counts. He says: I counsel you, if you're in that condition of lukewarmness, you need to buy from me. So what He's saying to buy, you can only get from Him; so notice He says: buy from me. Buy means - it's a word meaning - to go to the marketplace, and do trading. He said: there's a trade that will take place, for you get what I want you to have, and the only person you can get this, and do the trade with, is with Jesus Himself; so you can't come and try to do something for a person, thinking that that's what will give you good points in heaven. This is between you and Jesus, so buy from me. You can't go to a person. There's no minister can help you do this. This is something you personally do. You buy from Him. There's a trade takes place with Him.

Now there are two things, and the Bible's very clear about them. So if you're going to do a trade with God, something that's of value to you is surrendered, in order to receive something of greater value. We can't buy

things from God. We can't, but what we can do is, we can invest our life; and the consequence of it, is a return that comes to us, by the principle of sowing and reaping. You can't go to God and buy, and just trade: I give you this, you give me that. That's worldly thinking. No. What we need to do is, go to the Lord, and discover from Him what He wants us to do; and it will cost something. It costs you, often, your time. It costs you your energy. It sometimes costs you with disappointments, and difficulties with people. It costs you to serve and walk with God, and so there are two aspects of it. I'll just finish up with these right now.

In 1 John 2 He says: abide in Him, that you may have confidence when He comes and appears, and not be ashamed or naked before Him. Isn't that interesting? 1 John 2, He's saying: abide in Him; so the first thing we need to do in trading with God is, we need to value our relationship with Him, and invest in our relationship with God. Coming to church helps, that but it is not that. Your relationship with God is your personal connection. You can sit in a church, and not connect with God. You can sit, and come to a meeting, and be no different to a person who's in a religious situation anywhere. This is about connecting with God, so Jesus said: abide in me. That's a relationship, staying connected, keeping your heart free of wrong attitudes. Abide in me, let my words abide in you. You will bring forth fruit. So this is firstly intimacy with Him; secondly, Revelations 19 verse 8 says: to her was granted, that she would be arrayed in white arrayment, and the white garments are the righteous acts of the saints.

So there are two things I need to do. Number one, I need to invest in my relationship with God, learning how to remain connected with Him, abiding in Him, keeping my heart free from bitterness and inequity. I need to learn how to keep a passionate love for God alive. Number two, I need to passionately love people, because it says: for the fine linen, or the garments, are the righteous acts of the saints; and we saw last week that the righteous acts of the saints, are: acts of justice and generosity and mercy; on behalf of the poor, oppressed and needy. So the two things are summed up very clearly: love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and soul and mind and strength; and passionately love your neighbour, as yourself. If you do that, you'll not lack anything.

So a passionate love, ignited day by day, for the Lord; and a fervent love for people, that overcomes setbacks and disappointments, and expresses practically, practically, practically! How can you say you have love inside you, and you know God, if you see your brother with a practical need, and you don't reach out to help him? How can you say the love of God is living in you? It's incredibly practical, so the two things: developing a passionate, intimate relationship with God keeps me on track, and alive, and on fire; and I'm not wretched, and I'm not poor. Actually I'm very rich, and if I fill my life with flowing out from that relationship with God, with acts of kindness and mercy for the poor and the oppressed and the needy, then I'll be sure then that I have the garments that He wants from me.

And so the Bible says: there will be a day when you will enter into that kingdom, and may your entrance be glorious! May the entrance you have be glorious, because you worked on your life, and made yourself ready, and had a great life with God, and a great overflow of generosity! That is what this is all about, and the results will affect you for eternity. We all for a season of our lives are journeying together, but there is a day when we all give account and from that point on, we're in the realms God has appointed, wearing the garments He's appointed, associated with the honour of different realms.

You look in an army, you see the different ranks. You look into heaven, you'll see different ranks. You'll see different positionings and placings, you'll see different realms of expression, different realms of authority and rulership, different realms of glory. We are not all equal in heaven. It helps to get hold of this concept deeply in your heart, and realise I have one life to live. Let me run it passionately. I want to say like Paul did: I have run my race. I've fought my fight. Now is laid up for me a crown; which the Lord won't just give to me, but to all who love Him passionately, and live for Him. Hallelujah! What a great day! Oh, I get inspired thinking of the greatness of what is ahead for us, and the relevance of it to what we do in our life today. I hear an Amen?

Come on, why don't we stand. Let's give the Lord a clap. Let's let our hearts engage with Him. [Clapping] Thank you Lord, thank you Jesus. Here's just a couple of questions, just as we finish with a final song. How

are you doing, in your walk with God? What is happening, in your relationship with God? Is there passion, and fire, and love? Is there a hunger, and a pursuit for Him and his words? Are you spending time investing in that relationship; or have other things come in to fritter it away? Well just make a change. Repent, have a change of heart, and begin to return to Him again.

What's happening in your life in the area of kindness and generosity for people? The overflow - are you making time available, or your resources available? Is your home available; or is it just so precious, no one would ever been seen in there? Is what you have, open? If you have a heart that's open, just share it; make it available for God to work through. If you have a heart for those poor and oppressed, do you see people in need and feel moved by God to respond to that need? Only you can answer that. I believe God wants us to have a shift of heart, and spirit and passion; to get an eternal perspective; for if you fail to have that, you'll live unsatisfied with the short term, and miss on the big things.

Father, we thank you today that you are here with us today. We honour you that Lord, you have given your life for us, that you sent Jesus to die on the cross, such an incredible sacrifice. May we live a life that brings honour to Jesus. May we live it passionately, full of faith, full of love, full of desire and hunger for you and may our lives abound in generosity and goodness to the people around us. Lord, we call upon you to shift us individually, and corporately, into a greater passion in every area of our life, and living in Jesus' name - and everyone said: [Amen].

How many felt quite challenged here today? Really challenge you and some aspect of your life? Praise the Lord! We're not going to pray for you. You've just got to do something about it. Go back to Revelations 3. Do something about it, Amen?

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